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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on a combination questionnaire-attitude test designed to be used by speech instructors for the purpose of audience analysis. The test is divided into two parts and is scored by a computer. Part one requires the student to check items pertaining to class level, occupational goal, marital status, military service, high school grade average, geographical region, travel, job experiences, family income, and so forth. Part two assesses student attitudes and opinions on 75 issues (e.g., ppverty and welfare, tax reform, air and water pollution, crime, foreign aid, and abortion) and personalities (e.g., Ralph Nader, Senator Kennedy, and Henry Kissinger). The instrument is designed to be administered at the beginning of a public speaking course and the data can be reported as simple percentages, correlation results concerning individual class versus total sample, or one item versus any number of items. The demographic items once carefully developed remain stable, but some of the attitude items may need to be changed, deleged, or new items added as these variables are likely to change over time. (WR)

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AUDIENCE ANALYSIS:
A COMPUTER ASSISTED INSTRUMENT FOR SPEECH EDUCATION

A Paper Presented at the
Convention of the Southern Speech Communication Association

Committee on Speech Education

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AUDIENCE ANALYSIS: A COMPUTER-ASSISTED INSTRUMENT FOR SPEECH EDUCATION

Floyd E. Merritt[1]

A classic problem that faces the speech-communicator is audience analysis. An examination of numerous speech-communication textbooks reveals that considerable time and space are devoted to this important, but often superficially treated area of communication preparation. The great majority of this textbook material falls within two categories: demographic variables (i.e., age, sex, occupation, education, etc.) and attitude/convictions data. However, simply realizing that audiences differ on a host of variables does not adequately equip the communicator with enough crucial data to guide in the preparation of a message.

It appears that the speaker has at least three options available that could be utilized to obtain valuable information about a specific audience:

1) Assumption based upon past experience: While such an option may prove less time consuming than other alternatives, the speaker's assumptions may result in costly and/or unexpected and undesirable audience reactions and responses. Few speech-communication scholars would argue that two audiences are alike with regard to attitudes on specific issues.

2) Direct observation: a number of demographic variables can be gleaned by this technique. However, this direct perceptual approach does not provide statistical data relative to attitudes and opinions of the target audience.

3) Instrumentation: This technique can readily supply demographic data as well as attitudes and opinions of the specific audience.

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With regard to this final option, Clevenger suggests seven types of instruments that can be utilized to gain an understanding of a target audience.[2] At least two of these approaches (questionnaires and attitude tests) are of extreme value to the speech-communication department that provides public speaking courses in its curriculum. As Hoofman and Ochs concluded, all too often speech-communication instructors have spent considerable time discussing demographic variables that most frequently reveal large variations outside the classroom. All too often we have failed to analyze the visible and present audience the student must face.[3]

However, the use of a questionnaire and/or attitude test does present a time problem for the instructor. The use of either or both types of instruments require the instructor to prepare, administer, score, and tabulate the items. Frequently, the instructor must then interpret the results for class application.

To reduce this problem, we developed a uniform departmental instrument with statistical treatment by a computer. Since most colleges and universities (even many junior colleges and some high schools) have computers, it is a shame that the speech instructor is not utilizing them for purposes of audience analysis. Possibly many feel that they lack the technical knowledge necessary to use the computer. This should not be a deterring factor. The program required for scoring the questionnaire is relatively simple. In most instances the instructor would simply turn over the questionnaire to the school's programmer and he could write a program in relatively short time for tabulation of the data. For simple scoring or tabulation, he might be able to use a program that he has already

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available. In addition to the obvious efficiency of a computer tabulated questionnaire, the use of such lends sophistication and a more scientific aura to the speech-communication course.

The Instrument[4]

The combination questionnaire-attitude test is divided into two parts. Part I requires the student to check items pertaining to class level, occupational goal, marital status, military service, high school grade average, geographical region, travel, job experiences, family income, etc. The instrument requests a total of 50 demographic items. Part II assesses student attitudes and opinions of 75 issues and personalities. For example poverty and welfare, tax reform, air and water pollution, crime, foreign aid, Soviet-American detante, abortion, Senator Kennedy, Ralph Nader, President Nixon, Henry Kissenger, Vice-president Ford, Gloria Steinam, etc. The form uses an equal appearing interval scale (Strongly favor-Favor-Undecided-Oppose-Strongly oppose) for the response which the student makes on an IBM computer scoring sheet. We do not require the student's name or ID number on the scoring sheet. Since the student may consider some of the items highly personal, guaranteeing him anonymity assures the most candid and honest responses.

As Cronkhite has indicated, "Listeners may have extreme attitudes, may become deeply involved in their attitudes and beliefs and those the persuader is asking them to accept."[5] Knowing exactly how members of the audience (the class) feel on a large number of relevant, controversial, and contemporaneous issues and the conservative-liberal bent of their attitudes may preclude speeches

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on topics that are offensive and ineffective, and may also help the class appreciate the value or audience analysis. The instrument not only accomplishes its goal of yielding data for audience analysis, but also serves as a pedagogical instrument.

Procedure

At the beginning of each quarter all instructors of the various public speaking courses are provided with sufficient instruments and response sheets. Answers are later key punched and programmed by the university computer center. Print outs of results are then distributed to each class.

Although the majority of instructors prefer simple percentage data for their respective classes, correlation results are also available concerning individual class versus total sample, and one item versus (n) items. Obviously, tests of significance could also be utilized.

Class Applications

The instrument has served to stimulate instructors and students to use a variety of classroom teaching approaches. Some instructors have developed worthwhile classroom discussions concerning the results and accompanying implications of the audience analysis data. Instructors who wish to give more direction to the discussion and indicate some of the less obvious implications, may choose to personally direct a class discussion of the data. Those instructors who have more affinity for small groups and who feel that students learn more by self-discovery may choose to use the data for small group analysis and discussion. Other instructors

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may require the students to submit a written interpretative analysis of the data. Generally, the student would be required to draw a profile of the class and to respond to a number of questions suggested by the instructor in analyzing the data. Any of these approaches or a combination of them will bear valuable benefits and impress the students with both the necessary and means of conducting audience analysis.

Undoubtedly, numerous other applications could be constructed by individual instructors. What is crucial is the fact that this computer assisted instrument has demonstrated that meaningful audience analysis data can be obtained and utilized.

Benefits

Having employed the instrument for the three years, we have noted numerous benefits:

1) The resultant data have provided students with an understanding of a real and immediate audience. No longer is the student forced to rely on assumption or superficial direct observation.

2) Unlike Hoffman and Ochs.[6] who suggested student construction of individual questionnaires, our approach utilizes one instrument for all introductory courses (Other courses such as Discussion, Persuasion, and Interview and Conference have also used the instrument.) Consequently, students have been able to compare their responses with those of their peers. As Hance, Ralph, and Wiksell have indicated "Not only are audiences . . . different one from another in their beliefs and their responses, but also individuals with-

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in a given audience may vary widely in their attitudes toward the speaker and his subject and in their knowledge of the issues being discussed."[7]

3) This computer assisted test reduces the time required by the instructor in utilizing the instrument. The print-outs provide the non-quantitatively inclined instructor with a simple and yet valuable understanding of the target audience.

4) With only three years of operation, we are noting student differences on many issues. The speech-communication scholar has long claimed to speak for a discipline that is relevant and desirous of adaptation to the needs of society. Student responses suggest new areas of attention for persuasive and informative speaking.

5) Other disciplines (business, sociology, and political science) are interested in our approach and are beginning to initiate similar instruments applicable to their respective areas.

6) Data from the questionnaire have been made available to the Dean of Student Personnel Services, the Vice President for Student Affairs, and the President of the university. These administrators have expressed appreciation for the data and have testified to its usefulness to them as college administrators in terms of having more demographic data on the students and knowing their attitudes on the issues tested.

Since many issues are short-lived, the questionnaire must

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he kept up to date. The demographic items once carefully developed will remain stable, but some of the attitude/convictions items may need changing each new quarter or semester--some deleted because they've become passe; others added as new issues arise. This will cause no problem if one is interested only in quarter by quarter analysis. If he is analysing for trends over a period of several quarters or years, he is restricted to those items that remain stable over the period of time being studied.

Years ago Brembeck and Howell stated, "Probably more persuasion fails because of faulty or no audience analysis than for any other single reason."[8] This computer assisted instrument has demonstrated that audience analysis can be successfully accomplished in the speech-communication curriculum.

Footnotes

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[1]Dr. Merritt (Ph.D., Ohio State University, 1973) is assistant professor, Department of Speech-Communication, Eastern Illinois University. Charleston, Illinois. Dr. Bruce Wheatley and Dr. William Cash, Eastern Illinois University, contributed to the writing of an earlier, abbreviated version of this paper.

[2]Theodore Clevenger, Jr., Audience Analysis (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1966) 66-75.

[3]Richard Hoofman and Donovan J. Ochs, "Audience Analysis: An Exordium for the Basic Speech Course" Speech Teacher, XVIII, No. 1 (January 1969).

[4]Sample copies are available from the Center for Communication Research and Development, Eastern Illinois University, Charleston, Illinois 61920.

[5]Gary Cronkhite, Persuasion: Speech and Behavioral Change, (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1969), 139.

[6]Hoofman and Ochs, 25.

[7]Kenneth G. Hance, David D. Ralph, and Milton J. Wiksell, Principles of Speaking, 2d ed. (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1969) 53.

[8]Winston Brembeck and William Howell, Persuasion (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1952) 313.

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Spring '74 AUDIENCE ANALYSIS QUESTIONNAIRE Form AA, p. 1

INSTRUCTIONS: Make no marks on these questionnaire sheets--only on the score sheets provided, using the pencils provided. Data from the questionnaire will be summarized and given to you for purposes of better understanding of the audience for your speeches. Accurate information is, therefore, essential. The information you give will be held in strict confidence. Ask your instructor about any question that is not clear to you. Work rapidly, but carefully.

PART I - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

1. Class: 1. Freshman 2. sophomore 3. junior 4. senior 5. graduate

2. Age: 1. 18 or under 2. 19 3. 20 4. 21 5. 22 or over

3. Sex: 1. male 2. female

4. Marital status: 1. single 2. engaged 3. married 4. married with children 5. divorced

5. Social affiliation: 1. fraternity 2. sorority 3. independent

6. Highest degree planned: 1. B.A.-B.S. 2. M.A. 3. Ph.D. 4. Ed.D. 5. D.D.S.

7. " " " 1. D.V.M. 2. LL.B. 3. J.D. 4. M.D. 5. B.D.

8. Occupational goal: 1. Business 2. Government or Law 3. Education 4. Press/media 5. Health Profession

9. Rank in high school class: 1. top quarter 2. second quarter 3. third quarter 4. lower quarter

10. College grade average: 1. 3.5-4.0 2. 3.0-3.5 3. 2.5-3.0 4. 2.0-2.5 5. below 2.0

11. Scholarship: 1. none 2. partial ride 3. full ride

12. Past residence: 1. Illinois only 2. Illinois and other states 3. Out-of-State 4. Foreign

13. Residential area size: 1. less than 10,000 2. 10-50,000 3. 50-100,000 4. 100,000-1,000,000 5. over 1,000,000

14. Travel: 1. Europe 2. Canada or Mexico 3. 20 or more states in U.S. 4. Two or more of 1, 2, 3 5. None of these

15. Military service: 1. none 2. discharged 3. National Guard 4. Reserves 5. ROTC

16. Job experiences: 1. year or more full-time 2. year or more part-time 3. summers 4. occasional 5. none

17. Working now: 1. full-time 2. regular part-time 3. occasional 4. none

18. Participate in sports: 1. regularly 2. frequently 3. occasionally 4. none

19. Participate in music: 1. regularly 2. frequently 3. occasionally 4. none

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20. Watch television: 1. regularly 2. frequently 3. occasionally 4. none

21. Read off-campus newspaper: 1. regularly 2. frequently 3. occasionally 4. none

22. Read Eastern News: 1. regularly 2. frequently 3. occasionally 4. none

23. Read books (unassigned): 1. regularly 2. frequently 3. occasionally 4. none

24. Frequency of dates (if married, frequency of going out): 1. 3 or more times a week 2. twice a week 3. once a week 4. less than once a week

25. Attend church: 1. once a week 2. twice a week 3. more than twice a week 4. on special occasions 5. never

26. Religious attitude: 1. Conservative (fundamental, orthodox, traditional) 2. Moderate 3. Liberal

27. Religious perference: 1. Protestant 2. Catholic 3. Jewish 4. Other or no preference 5. Feel no need for religion

28. Political attitude: 1. ultraliberal 2. liberal 3. moderate 4. conservative 5. ultraconservative

29. Political preference: 1. Democrat 2. Republican 3. Independent 4. American Independent 5. Other

30. Registered to vote: 1. no 2. yes-in home town 3. yes-in Charleston

31. Father is living: 1. yes 2. no

32. Mother is living: 1. yes 2. no

33. Father's political preference: 1. Democrat 2. Republican 3. Independent 4. American Independent 5. Other

34. Mother's political preference: 1. Democrat 2. Republican 3. Independent 4. American Independent 5. Other

35. Number of children in family or origin: 1. 1 2. 2 3. 3 4. 4 5. 5 or more

36. Relation to my siblings: 1. older 2. younger 3. between 4. only child

37. Father's occupation: 1. skilled labor or farming 2. factory worker 3. sales 4. management or supervision 5. professional

38. Mother's occupation: 1. does not work outside home 2. clerical 3. sales 4. management or supervision 5. professional

39. Parental family income: 1. $0-2999 2. $3000-5999 3. $6000-7499 4. $7500-8999 5. $9000-$11,999

40. " " " 1. $12,000-$14,999 2. $15,000-$17,999 3. $18,000-$20,999 4. $21,000-$23,999 5. over $24,000

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41. Father's education: 1. grammar 2. high school 3. business, technical, or vocational 4. college 5. graduate school

42. Mother's education: 1. grammar 2. high school 3. business, technical, or vocational 4. college 5. graduate school

43. Financing college education: 1. paying own way 2. partial support from parents 3. full support from parents

44. Present living quarters: 1. at home 2. dormitory 3. fraternity or sorority 4. apartment 5. private room

45. Previous experience in speech: 1. high school speech course 2. h.s. debate 3. h.s. individual events 4. h.s. drama 5. 2 or more of 1-4

46. I expect this course to be: 1. easy 2. average 3. tough

47. I expect my grade in this course to be: 1. higher than my average 2. lower than my average 3. average

48. I regard this course as: 1. mostly relevant to my vocation 2. more relevant to general education 3. fulfilling my personal needs

49. I expect the most important part of this course to be: 1. practice 2. comments and criticism 3. principles and theory 4. interaction with other students 5. developing skills

50. My attitude toward taking this course is: 1. highly favorable 2. favorable 3. neutral/not sure/mixed emotions 4. unfavorable 5. highly unfavorable

PART II - ATTITUDES-CONVICTIONS DATA

For each of the items listed below, indicate your attitude as: 1. strongly favor 2. favor 3. neutral, not sure, or mixed emotions 4. oppose 5. strongly oppose

51. Gas rationing

52. Israeli reprisals against Arabs

53. Arab oil boycott

54. Foreign economic aid

55. Trade with communist countries (e.g. wheat to Russia; Boeing 707's to China)

56. Aid to communist countries

57. President Nixon resigning because of Watergate scandal

58. Balanced federal budget

59. Open admissions policy at FIU

60. Impeachment of Nixon because of Watergate scandal and alleged political espionage.

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61. University's right to regulate student's life on campus.

62. Government protection of consumer.

63. Reduction of NATO forces

64. Stricter enforcement of law and order

65. Cutting defense budget

Indicate your attitude as: 1. Strongly favor; 2. Favor 3. Neutral, not sure, or mixed emotions; 4. Oppose; 5. Strongly oppose

66. Labor unions

67. Cross-the-board freeze of prices, wages, profits, rent, to curb inflation

68. Establishing diplomatic relations with Red China

69. The present national administration

70. Black power

71. A guaranteed annual income

72. Bussing students to secure racial balance

73. Re-enactment of death penalty for serious crimes (e.g. skyjacking, kidnapping, rape, treason, first degree murder)

74. Integrated neighborhoods

75. Shooting rioters

76. Voluntary prayer and Bible reading in public schools

77. Vice-President Gerald Ford

78. "Porn" movies such as "Deep Throat"

79. Euthanasia (mercy killing)

80. Disobedience of "bad laws"

81. Co-ed dorms

82. Abortion "on demand"

83. 7-Day, 24-hour open house in residence halls

84. Ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment

85. Premarital sex

86. Inter-racial dating

87. Mixed marriages

88. Birth control

89. Gay liberation movement

90. Senator Ed Kennedy

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91. Alcoholic beverages in residence halls

92. Smoking marijuana

Indicate your attitude as: 1. Strongly favor; 2. Favor; 3. Neutral, not sure, or mixed emotions; 4. Oppose; 5. Strongly oppose

93. Legalizing marijuana

94. Unions for public school teachers (including college faculty)

95. Legalizing prostitution

96. Cigarette smoking

97. Fraternities and sororities

98. Pass-fail grading system

99. Sterilization of chronic welfare recipients

100. Violence on TV

101. Establishing diplomatic relations with Cuba

102. Surgical sex changes

103. Making Black history an all-university requirement at CIU

104. Teacher strikes (including college)

105. George Wallace

106. The Health Center providing "the Pill" to co-eds "on demand"

107. Former Vice President Spiro Agnew's resignation

108. Women's liberation

109. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger

110. Amnesty for Viet Nam draft dodgers

111. Mayor Daley

112. Firearm registration and licensing

113. Playing/singing of Star Spangled Banner at athletic events

114. Soviet-American detente

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115. Gloria Steinam

116. Parochiaid

117. Improving services offered to EIU students (counseling, housing, health, etc.)

118. Jesse Jackson

119. Senator Percy

120. Senator Stevenson

121. Nelson Rockefeller

122. Ronald Reagan

123. Senator Mondale

124. Ralph Nader

125. Senator Baker

126. John Connally

127. Alaskan oil pipeline